



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Office of the Administrator

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

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DOCKET SECTION

November 19, 1997

Refer to: HPS-10/HCS-10

The Honorable Peter T. King
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-3203

FHWA-97-2759-52

Dear Mr. King:

Thank you for your October 23 letter expressing your opposition to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) proposal to modify the English language proficiency requirement for drivers of vehicles used in interstate commerce. I understand your concern and appreciate the opportunity to respond.

In an effort to reconcile its obligation to improve highway safety with concerns that the present rule may conflict with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the FHWA published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the August 26, 1997, *Federal Register*. A copy of that notice is enclosed.

As the *Federal Register* notice explains, the FHWA seeks to modify the regulation by replacing the broadly worded English proficiency requirement with a set of performance-oriented standards. These standards would be based on tasks drivers are expected to perform that require knowledge of the English language.

Your comments will be considered along with others received during the comment period. These comments will be summarized in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, to be published in a future edition of the *Federal Register*. Any signed, written comments you make on the proposed rulemaking notice will be considered in development of the Final Rule, which also will be published in the *Federal Register*.

Again, thank you for expressing your concern about the proposed revision of this significant regulation.

Sincerely yours,

Kenneth R. Wykle
Administrator

Enclosure

3 pgs

PETER T. KING

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NEW YORK STATE DELEGATION

October 23, 1997

Ms. Gloria Jeff
Acting Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Ms. Jeff:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to a proposal by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) to change the requirement that interstate commercial vehicle drivers demonstrate a proficiency in the English language.

The English language is the glue that binds together our nation's varied immigrant cultures, traditions and beliefs. For the first 190 years of our nation's history, millions of immigrants came to our shores knowing that they were expected to learn English in order to claim their share of the American Dream. They did and they prospered.

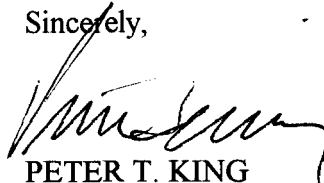
Unfortunately, the purveyors of political correctness have been successful in instituting big government programs to actively discourage immigrants from learning English. There has been a frontal assault by the liberals on the English language over the last 30 years ranging from bilingual education programs to mandating bilingual voting ballots. This ill-conceived FHA proposal is one more attempt to diminish the status of English in our society.

Additionally, the FHA proposal may have serious safety ramifications. Knowledge of the English language is as critical to driving in the United States as knowing how to safely operate a commercial vehicle. Drivers who are unable to read road signs in English would pose a safety hazard to other motorists. Drivers unable to understand English would be not be able to assist stranded motorists, inform emergency units of accidents, and report on road conditions. That the federal government would compromise the safety of the driving public to pander to the multiculturalists is simply outrageous and must not be allowed to happen.

Ms. Gloria Jeff
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The government has a duty to ensure that drivers can safely navigate America's highways. The FHA proposal would abrogate this duty and endanger motorists. I strongly urge the FHA to abandon its irresponsible proposal.

Sincerely,



PETER T. KING
Member of Congress